


Exhibit A

Gordon Ernst



February 8, 2022

Honorable Indira Talwani
United States District Judge
District of Massachusetts
John Joseph Moakley U.S. Courthouse
1 Courthouse Way, Suite 2300
Boston, MA 02210

Dear Judge Talwani:

I am writing to you to express my deep regret for my choices and actions that have led me to be before you standing to be judged. I admit that I accepted unlawful payments from the families of prospective Georgetown applicants for which I alone am responsible. I accept full responsibility for my actions and will accept my punishment with humility. To everyone I harmed directly and indirectly, and to those I have disappointed when I broke the law, I apologize. I will spend the rest of my life working to become the noble man that I am meant to be, make amends, earn back the trust of those I have wronged and to become worthy of forgiveness.

Your Honor, I write this letter hoping that it will bring you more insight into my life and character.

I was born on January 25, 1967, in Warwick, Rhode Island, as the middle of three sons. My father coached tennis and hockey at Cranston East High School for fifty-four years. My mother stayed home to be the a "hockey mom" to my brothers and me. My father was more of a coach and tyrant than a dad. Often he was overcome by rage when my mother, brothers and I didn't meet his high expectations or demands. At times when I had failed in his eyes, he beat me to the point of bruises and injuries. These were horrific moments in my childhood that have been hard to look past over the years. I remember almost always being braced on the car rides home from a game or at night in bed when he would come into my bedroom wielding a belt or worse. It was a confusing and chaotic time especially because I also revered and loved him for his larger-than-life character and how he was perceived in the community.

Through it all, I enjoyed athletic success and awards for achievement and sportsmanship. As you may be aware, Rhode Island and Providence have been home to a lot of unsavory characters and as a sports family of some note, we drew a lot of attention from many of these people. My younger brother, Andy, had a true athletic gift and although I tried to look out for him, he fell in with this crowd and started abusing drugs at a young age. By high school, he joined the criminal elements to support his drug habits. I was in fear for his safety and my family's reputation, so I worked hard to look after him and help my parents cover it up to the outside world. Looking back, I realize that I was not able to separate myself from the chaos it caused.

After graduating high school in 1985, I enrolled at Brown University and played on the hockey and tennis teams. Unfortunately, I suffered a series of joint injuries and multiple concussions. In 1989, I took a semester off to join my brother, Andy, on a semi-professional hockey team in Quesnel, British Columbia. I felt as though I had to look after him as he had tremendous athletic talent while at the same time his drug

use had progressed to smoking crack cocaine. I loved being with him and tried to help but felt powerless to lift him up from the dangerous path he was on.

In 1993, I met my wife Lisa at a cancer benefit tennis tournament in Falmouth, Massachusetts. In 1996, I started working at Lehman Brothers in the municipal bonds department. It took eighteen dreary months at a desk before I realized that I could not stay in finance. I had been playing recreational hockey and tennis with my peers and younger kids and when I realized my true passion was to coach and mentor young athletes. I decided to become a coach and be different than the example set by my father in that I was resolute to always be positive and kind in ways that I had not experienced. In 1997, I became the assistant coach of the Northwestern University Men's Tennis Team. After a year, I became the head tennis coach at University of Pennsylvania.

Lisa and I married in 1999 before moving to Massachusetts to where we had decided to settle and start a family. For two years, I coached tennis and hockey at a boarding school in Concord. Next, Vineyard Youth Tennis on Martha's Vineyard hired me to run their tennis program. I commuted each day from Falmouth where we lived near Lisa's family. Then, on November 16, 2002, Lisa and I welcomed our first daughter, [REDACTED], and two years later our daughter [REDACTED].

In February of 2006, the Georgetown University Athletic Director offered me the head tennis coach position for both men's and women's programs at a salary of \$50K/year. I accepted the offer knowing that the tennis program was not a priority at Georgetown and with a belief that I could breathe life into the program and have a positive influence on the lives of young men and women. We moved to the DC area and suddenly I was coaching two teams, raising two daughters, and teaching tennis lessons on weekends to make ends meet.

Slowly but surely, I improved the men's and women's tennis programs at Georgetown. I recruited better players and initiated summer camps for about 250 young players each year. I held open tryouts for non-recruited and recruited players. The program earned a solid reputation for excellence and good sportsmanship as I constructed a lineup based not only on skill but also on the character and potential intangible contributions of my players. I worked hard to create a family atmosphere while pushing each player to be the best they could be. I devoted my life to those players, sometimes at the expense of family time. Part of my job was also to raise money for the University to cover the tennis program's budget. At that point, I was uncorrupted and proud of the impact my efforts had had in shaping young lives.

In 2008, a friend introduced me to Rick Singer at an event at the IMG Academy in Bradenton, Florida. When I met Rick, he was sitting in a booth promoting The Key, his college counseling business. I don't remember much from that first encounter with Rick other than he was seemingly passionate about helping kids. About a year later, Rick Singer reached out to me directly. He told me about an applicant's family that wanted to donate money to Georgetown. We talked about how I could help that applicant with the admission process. Later, Rick explained that I could be personally compensated, and I agreed to the arrangement.

In 2013, Georgetown decided to demolish University tennis courts in order to build a basketball facility leaving our teams without adequate facilities and scrambling to continue the program at nearby high school tennis courts. I grappled with family and professional stress. In 2014, my brother Andy died from a heroin overdose in a motel room over Thanksgiving weekend. While I mourned his loss, I knew that I too was going down a slippery slope of accepting unlawful payments and abusing my position at Georgetown.

Your Honor, there is absolutely no excuse for my wrongful acts. While I became sick inside with self-hatred, I felt the victim and justified my actions with a list of grievances and a host of lies I would tell myself in order to rationalize my behavior for years. Looking back, I lacked the honesty and humility to do what was right and ask for help.

In 2017, Georgetown opened an investigation into my unethical activities. After reviewing my emails, Georgetown fired me in the Spring of 2018. I was forced to look in the mirror and the impact of the self-examination that followed took me down a dark rabbit hole. Six months later, I suffered a stroke. Federal agents arrested me in 2019. Your Honor, I deeply regret my selfish actions in this case. I apologize to any student whose name I passed along this way. Most likely, they were unaware and never asked for such painful scrutiny. I accept full responsibility for my actions.

Since I was arrested, I have done several things to be productive to my family and contribute to society: I teach tennis, have worked part-time at Hertz cleaning cars. I attend church on a regular basis and do volunteer work for Catholic charities, at soup kitchens, and Cape Cod Medical Reserve Corps to deliver meals to needy families. I also assisted the effort to roll out covid vaccines by parking cars for the elderly while they received medical care. Currently, I have a job teaching tennis part-time at Cardinal Hill Swim and Racquet Club in Virginia.

I want to do good and be redeemed. I have learned and will continue to learn and be in service of others as I strive for peace, reconciliation and healing for my family. I know that life is asking me to own my mistakes, take corrective action and become the man I was meant to be. I pray to God for guidance and strength to do the right thing consistently without deviation. I have learned from my mistakes and have emerged with a complete and total commitment to live an honorable life. I will dedicate my life toward helping others. I want my children to see how I accepted responsibility with honesty and humility. In the years ahead, if given the opportunity, I will continue to use my calling to help others. I also want to pass along the lessons I've learned to help young people stay on the right path. While I pay my debt to society and each day forward, I will atone for my actions, make amends, heal my family, seek forgiveness and be a positive influence on the lives of others. I ask for your mercy and thank you for your thoughtful consideration in this matter.

With respect,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gordon Ernst". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gordon Ernst